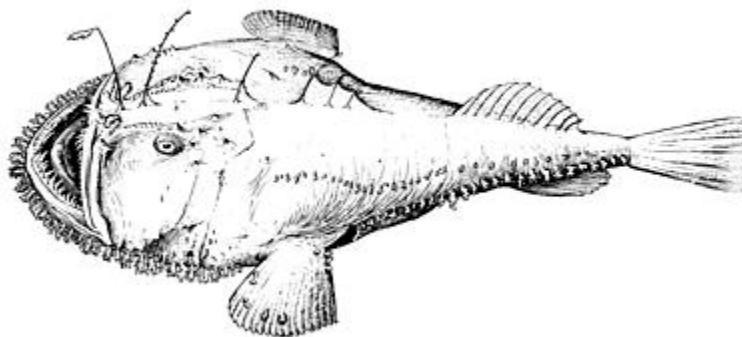


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Monkfish Fishery Management Plan Framework Adjustment 9

Alternatives under Consideration As edited by the Monkfish Committee on April 7, 2015

Committee Edits not yet reviewed by PDT



NEFMC Meeting

April 21, 2015

1.0 Alternatives under Consideration

1.1 Modifications to current DAS/Trip Limit system

1.1.1 Allow vessels to declare a Northeast Multispecies DAS at sea

In order to land more than incidental amounts of monkfish, vessels must be fishing under a monkfish DAS, a NE multispecies DAS, an Atlantic sea scallop DAS, or a combination of both monkfish and NE multispecies DAS or scallop DAS. Permit Category C and D vessels (i.e., those also issued a limited access NE multispecies DAS permit) can declare a monkfish DAS while at sea in the NFMA. However, the vessel operator must first declare his/her intent to fish on a NE multispecies DAS and later possibly declare a monkfish DAS while at sea (also known as declaring the “monkfish option”) prior to leaving port at the start of its trip. Similar flexibility does not currently exist to allow such vessel operators to also declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea.

The following options consider revising when and where a NE multispecies DAS can be declared to reduce monkfish discards, increase allowable monkfish landings, and increase operational flexibility by allowing vessels to also fish outside of existing monkfish exempted fisheries.

1.1.1.1 Option 1: No Action

Existing regulations do not allow a vessel operator to declare a NE multispecies DAS while at sea. Therefore, if the operator of a limited access monkfish Category C and D vessel began a NE multispecies sector trip without also declaring his/her intent to fish under a NE multispecies DAS, he/she could not land more than an incidental amount of monkfish. Further, the operator could not declare a NE multispecies DAS after leaving port to land a higher incidental amount of monkfish allowed when fishing under a NE multispecies DAS. While vessels may declare a monkfish DAS at sea if the monkfish incidental limit is exceeded, there is no such provision in the multispecies plan. Therefore, vessels must start the trip on a groundfish DAS to allow the use of the at-sea monkfish DAS declaration provision.

~~1.1.1.2 Option 2: Allow all limited access Monkfish Category C, D, and H vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in both the NFMA and SFMA~~

~~The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C, D, or H vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non DAS trip or under a monkfish only DAS may declare his/her intent to also use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change the trip's DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.~~

~~*Rationale:* Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at sea (i.e., the monkfish “option”), this would allow groundfish DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a groundfish DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if groundfish DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a groundfish DAS at sea.~~

1.1.1.3 Option 3: ~~Allow only groundfish sector vessels holding limited access Monkfish Category C, D, and H permits to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in both the NFMA and SFMA~~

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C, D, or H sector vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish only DAS may declare his/her intent to also use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change its DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

Rationale: Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at sea (i.e., the monkfish "option"), this would allow groundfish DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a groundfish DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if groundfish DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a groundfish DAS at sea.

1.1.1.4 Option 4: Allow all limited access Monkfish Category C and D, ~~and H~~ vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in the Northern Fishery Management Area

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C and D, ~~or H~~ vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS in the Northern Fishery Management Area (NFMA) may declare his/her intent to use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change the DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

Rationale: Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish "option"), this would allow NE multispecies DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if NE multispecies DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a NE multispecies DAS at sea. This option focuses on the NFMA only because incidental limits have been shown to be more likely to be exceeded there (FW 4).

1.1.1.5 Option 5: Allow only groundfish sector vessels holding limited access Monkfish Category C, and D, ~~and H~~ permits to declare a NE multispecies DAS at sea in the Northern Fishery Management Area

The operator of any limited access monkfish Category C and D, ~~or H~~ sector vessel fishing on a NE multispecies sector non-DAS trip or under a monkfish-only DAS in the Northern Fishery Management Area may declare his/her intent to use a NE multispecies Category A DAS on the same trip before returning to port. The vessel operator must change the DAS declaration to include a NE multispecies DAS through the vessels' VMS unit before crossing the VMS demarcation line upon its return to port.

Rationale: Similar to the existing provision allowing monkfish DAS to be declared at-sea (i.e., the monkfish “option”), this would allow NE multispecies DAS to be declared at sea as well. This would enable monkfish vessels to declare a NE multispecies DAS after leaving port to enable them to land more monkfish than the incidental monkfish limit if NE multispecies DAS were not being used on that trip, rather than encouraging the discard of monkfish in excess of the incidental limit. This would also increase the operational flexibility of monkfish vessels by allowing those vessels fishing under a monkfish-only DAS to fish in more than just the groundfish exempted fishery areas upon declaring a NE multispecies DAS at sea. This option focuses on the NFMA only because incidental limits have been shown to be more likely to be exceeded there (FW 4).

1.1.2 Southern Fishery Management Area at-sea Monkfish DAS declaration

1.1.2.1 No Action

The provision that allows a vessel on a NE multispecies, but not a monkfish DAS, to declare a monkfish DAS at sea prior to returning to port in the event the vessel exceeds the monkfish incidental limit currently only applies in the Northern Fishery Management Area. Vessels in the Southern Fishery Management Area must start the trip on a monkfish DAS to be able to land more than the incidental limit.

1.1.2.2 Allow at-sea Monkfish DAS declaration in the SMA

This alternative would allow vessels on a groundfish DAS in the Southern Fishery Management Area to declare a monkfish DAS at sea prior to returning to port in the event the vessel exceeds the monkfish incidental limit.

Rationale: Vessels fishing for monkfish in the SFMA must be on a groundfish DAS to land more than the incidental limit of monkfish. In some cases, while fishing for monkfish, vessels catch more than the applicable monkfish incidental limit and must discard the overage. This provision would enable those vessel to land monkfish up to the applicable monkfish DAS trip limit by allowing those vessels to declare a monkfish DAS prior to returning to port. Adopting this provision will make the SFMA fishery more consistent with the NFMA fishery which already has the at-sea declaration provision.

1.1.3 ~~Increase monkfish-only DAS based on higher groundfish common pool DAS counting~~

1.1.3.1 Option 1: No Action

1.1.3.2 Option 2: ~~Increase monkfish-only DAS based on higher groundfish common pool DAS counting~~

~~This alternative would increase the allocation of monkfish DAS to offset the impact of groundfish DAS differential counting for common pool vessels. A vessel’s monkfish allocation would be increased proportionate to the difference between groundfish DAS charged and monkfish DAS charged so that each vessel would be able to fully utilize its annual allocation of monkfish DAS to the extent possible. Any monkfish DAS allocated that exceed the groundfish DAS allocation would have to be fished as monkfish-~~

only DAS, or the vessel would have to lease in additional groundfish DAS to continue fishing its monkfish DAS in combination with groundfish DAS.

Rationale: A common pool vessel is charged groundfish DAS in 24 hour increments, but is charged monkfish DAS based on actual time fishing, or a minimum of 15 hours if fishing with gillnets. This means that such vessels use groundfish DAS faster than monkfish DAS. Current monkfish regulations allow a Category C, D, F, G, or H vessel to fish monkfish only DAS (i.e., operate as a Category A or B monkfish permit) if its monkfish DAS allocation is greater than its groundfish DAS allocation and after having used all its groundfish DAS allocation. However, the regulations do not make any accommodation for differential counting of groundfish DAS, and as such, the combined regulations may prevent vessels from fully utilizing their allocated monkfish during a fishing year, or force them to lease additional groundfish DAS. This alternative would ensure that monkfish vessels can fish their full monkfish DAS allocations based on the area fished by increasing the number of monkfish only DAS by the difference between the groundfish and monkfish DAS charged on a particular trip. Such vessels would still be required to use their monkfish only DAS in exempted fishing areas.

1.1.4 Modify DAS/trip limit allocation for Category F (offshore) vessels

1.1.4.1 No Action

Category F vessels may possess 1,600 pounds (tail weight) and their DAS usage is prorated, depending on what standard monkfish permit the vessel has been issued. A Category F permit's monkfish DAS allocation will be calculated based on the existing formula as follows:

Monkfish DAS allocation = [applicable SFMA trip limit for original permit category/1,600] x [32 monkfish DAS + carry over DAS]

1.1.4.2 Increase the trip limit and adjust monkfish DAS allocations accordingly

Under this alternative, the trip limit applicable to Category F vessels would be increased [to a level to be determined]. The number of DAS that would be allocated for the year would be based on either the existing DAS allocation calculation, or a revised DAS allocation calculation, as follows:

Sub-Option 1 (existing DAS calculation): Monkfish DAS allocation = [the applicable SFMA trip limit for original permit category ÷ monkfish Category F trip limit] x [32 monkfish DAS + carry over DAS]

Example: If the Category F trip limit is 2,200 lbs. tail weight per DAS, a vessel originally issued a monkfish Category A or C permit that carried over 4 DAS from the previous fishing year would be allocated 9.98 monkfish DAS [(610 lb/DAS ÷ 2,200 lb/DAS) x 36 DAS]

Sub-Option 2 (revised DAS calculation): Monkfish DAS allocation = monkfish Category F trip limit ÷ the applicable SFMA trip limit for original permit category]

Example: If the Category F trip limit is 2,200 lbs. tail weight per DAS, a vessel originally issued a monkfish Category A or C permit would be allocated 3.6 monkfish DAS [(2,200 lb/DAS ÷ 610 lb/DAS)]

Rationale: This provision would help to improve the profitability and safety of Offshore Area trips by allowing vessels to land more monkfish per DAS fished and return to port without having to remain at sea until sufficient time has elapsed to account for the amount of monkfish retained on board.

1.1.5 DAS requirements for RSA vessels when on a monkfish DAS

1.1.5.1 No Action

Vessels participating in the RSA program are allocated additional monkfish RSA DAS. A vessel must declare their intent to use a monkfish RSA DAS prior to leaving the dock.

1.1.5.2 Allow monkfish vessels to re-declare from a monkfish DAS to a monkfish RSA DAS while at sea

Vessels that exceed existing monkfish trip limits while on a monkfish DAS would be allowed to switch to a monkfish RSA DAS, while at sea, to land additional monkfish. Such a declaration must occur before returning to port, and comply with applicable reporting requirements for the monkfish RSA program and applicable EFP conditions.

Rationale: This measure would reduce discards and increase operational flexibility by allowing vessels to land monkfish in excess of existing monkfish trip limits while under a DAS.

1.2 Modifications to Monkfish Possession Limits

1.2.1 Northern Area Monkfish Trip Limit on a NE Multispecies DAS

1.2.1.1 No Action

Under current regulations, vessels on a monkfish DAS are subject to a trip limit, and when on a NE multispecies, but not a monkfish DAS they in the Northern Fishery Management Area have an incidental limit of 600 lbs. tail wt. per DAS.

1.2.1.2 Eliminate the Trip Limit on a Groundfish DAS

This alternative would eliminate the monkfish trip limit when a *Category C and D* vessel is on a NE multispecies DAS in the NFMA, effectively eliminating the need to use a monkfish DAS.

Rationale: Eliminating the monkfish trip limit in the NFMA is intended to increase monkfish landings to more fully utilize the ACT in the NFMA. This could provide additional fishing revenue for groundfish vessels to help offset expected fishing revenue reductions associated with reduced groundfish quotas in NFMA in the near future, and minimize the potential for effort to shift from the groundfish fishery in the NFMA to the monkfish fishery in the SFMA.

1.3 Modifications to gear requirements while on monkfish DAS

1.3.1 Modification to mesh size requirements on monkfish only DAS

1.3.1.1 No Action

Vessels fishing under monkfish DAS must fish with trawls having mesh no smaller than 10-inches square or 12-inches diamond in the codend, unless the vessel has a Category C or D permit and is also fishing under a NE multispecies DAS. If a vessel is fishing on a NE multispecies and monkfish DAS, a trawl must have mesh that conforms with the regulations for the NE Multispecies FMP. If using a gillnet during a monkfish DAS, the gillnet must have mesh no smaller than 10-inches diamond. Vessels may have smaller mesh on board if it is stowed so that it is not available for immediate use.

To accommodate situations when a vessel hauls up mesh smaller than the minimum legal size (for example, a lost or discarded small mesh net), the minimum mesh on board regulation will apply to pieces of mesh larger than three feet square. Vessel captains should take necessary steps to render the mesh unusable (e.g. cutting up large pieces into pieces smaller than three feet square, and otherwise destroying the mesh).

Rationale: The primary purpose of requiring large mesh is to reduce bycatch of other marine species while retaining the larger monkfish. This management measure could improve the possibility that more exempted areas would be open for targeting monkfish, if the bycatch of other species was below the legal thresholds. Monkfish size selectivity by these large mesh nets is unknown, but they could have a beneficial effect on size selection. The body shape of monkfish, however, prevents even large changes in minimum mesh size from substantially improving monkfish selectivity. The FMP, therefore, relies more on day-at-sea allocations, trip limits, and size limits to reduce fishing mortality.

1.3.1.2 Allow mesh <10" mesh standup gillnet to be used on monkfish-only DAS

This alternative would allow limited access monkfish vessels to target other species, e.g. dogfish, using less than 10" mesh stand-up gillnets and also retain legal-sized monkfish when fishing on a monkfish or a monkfish/NE multispecies DAS on the same trip.

Rationale: This alternative increases operational flexibility of monkfish operations by allowing vessels to target both monkfish and dogfish using different gear types when on a monkfish DAS.